

## **Helping Young Adults Overcome Feelings of Isolation and Loneliness**

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As young adults transition into a new life stage, they often do it alone. The transition comes while they are balancing the pressure of establishing their own identity (making their own way) and the pressure of feeling alone (on their own). The dueling pressures create a lot of conflict. James Fowler calls the movement away from childhood/adolescent authority structures “critical distancing” and “establishing an executive ego.” In everyday language, that means young adults feel the need to establish their own identity, independent of early influences. Separation isn’t necessarily rebellion but the natural development of an adult.

While there are good results from this distancing—becoming oneself—it is fraught with emotional danger. In becoming independent, young adults feel isolated. Self-discovery can result in self-disappointment. The safety net they left is now needed.

Intense feelings of isolation, abandonment, and loneliness can result. Spiritual mentors play a crucial role in guiding and supporting young adults navigating these challenging transitions. A strong spiritual mentor, using Scripture, can help the young adult.

Remind them:

### **A. God will stay with them.**

*Isaiah 41:10 (ESV) Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.*

This verse reassures young adults that, even in moments of isolation and fear, they are not alone. God’s presence is a constant source of strength, offering guidance and comfort when they feel abandoned.

Remind them:

### **B. God will help them.**

*Hebrews 13:5–6 (ESV) Keep your life free from love of money, and be content with what you have, for he has said, “I will never leave you nor forsake you.” So we can confidently say, “The Lord is my helper; I will not fear; what can man do to me?”*

This passage emphasizes God’s unwavering commitment to His children and encourages young adults to find contentment in God’s presence. He is their helper. They are not alone in their daily struggles. It’s also a great passage to follow up on the importance of contentment. Some of their desires for “more” are the very thing setting them up for failure.

Remind them:

### **C. God will listen to them.**

*Philippians 4:6–7 (ESV) Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.*

Teach young adults that prayer is essential. God is who they need to be talking to more than anyone else. Reminding students to turn to prayer in times of anxiety and loneliness provides a sense of connection with the divine. They are not alone. God is listening and wants to be there for them. The promise of God's peace offers comfort. He hears them, He cares for them, and He can bring them peace. When they surrender to Him, He will guard their heart and mind. When they are incapable of arriving at peace, He will intervene and protect them.

Remind them:

### **D. God understands them.**

*Hebrews 4:15–16 For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.*

When you are lonely, you feel like you are “on your own.” It can feel like no one understands what you are going through. This happens at the same time young adults are trying to determine their unique identity. This pursuit of “who they are” can cause them to question themselves. Doubt becomes a constant enemy. Remind them God understands their feelings. They aren't weird. He gets them and their concerns. The One who was abandoned in the Garden wants to embrace them. The One rejected on the Cross wants to accept them.

As young adult leaders, God's Word is our greatest tool in helping lonely young adults. Take them to Scripture. While doing so, there are some other practical things you can help them with. You should do the following:

1. **Develop a Supportive Community.** Encourage young adults to be a part of a local church community or faith-based campus group where they can be with others facing similar challenges. Connecting young adults to other young adults who are also experiencing loneliness enables them to establish healthy relationships.
2. **Give Access to Counseling Resources.** Don't assume this issue is small. Where needed, connect young adults with professionals who can offer guidance and support for mental health struggles. As their spiritual leader, know your limitations. Identify trusted professionals you can refer people to for help. Know in advance who you will connect them to.

3. **Host Regular Activities.** Organized events create a community and a sense of belonging. Design programming that helps students build relationships. Don't just watch movies together—have interactive events. While tempting, you fail if you only connect them to you!
4. **Just hang out.** More often than not, the cure to loneliness is presence. Spend time with the young adults in your life. Enjoy meals together. Drink coffee. Watch ball games on TV or in person. Be together.

Navigating the isolation, abandonment, and loneliness that can be part of the young adult years is difficult. But a good spiritual mentor using the Word of God and the guidance of the Holy Spirit can make a difference. You want to foster the development of godly identity while at the same time remaining in contact for development and security.